

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8554

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CINCPAC

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, KS, KN

SUBJECT: KOREAN REACTION TO FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES

1. BASED ON OUR SOUNDINGS SO FAR, INITIAL KOREAN REACTION TO PRESIDENT PARK' S JUNE 23 FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENT SEEMS TO BE PRAGMATIC, NEITHER NEGATIVE NOR ENTHUSIASTIC, WITH ACCEPTANCE OF IT AS LOGICAL MOVE IN THE FACE OF PREVAILING REALITIES.

2. SOME VIEW THE NORTH' S ACCEPTANCE INTO WHO AS HAVING FORCED ROK' S HAND AND SEE THE NEW POLICY AS A DEFENSIVE REACTION TO CONTINUING ADVANCES BY NORTH RATHER THAN AS AN AGGRESSIVE STROKE OF ROK DIPLOMACY. A FEW OBSERVERS, IN MIDLY CRITICAL VIEW, DEPLORE IMPLICIT RECOGNITION OF NORTH KOREA AS AN EQUAL, BUT MOST ACCEPT INEVITABILITY OF FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE.

3. DELAY IN EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FROM THE OPPOSITION NDP WAS NOT DUE TO ANY REAL DISPOSITION BY MAJORITY OF NDP LEADERS TO OPPOSE THE POLICY. MANY IN OPPOSITION HAD IN PAST ADVOCATED SIMILAR POLICIES. GOVERNMENT HAD CLEARLY SIGNALLED ITS INTENTIONS AND NDP LEADERSHIP WAS AWARE OF CHANGE
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A FEW DAYS BEFORE ANNOUNCED. NDP PROBABLY HOPED TO EXTRACT SOME CONCESSION FROM THE GOVERNMENT AS PRICE FOR EXPRESSING ITS SUPPORT AND AT SAME TIME WISHED AVOID APPEARING TOO MUCH A CREATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT BY IMMEDIATE DECLARATION OF SUPPORT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A MINORITY VIEW AMONG MORE INDEPENDENT OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS THAT NEW POLICY IS PROOF OF FAILURE OF PAST GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT PARK REGIME'S PAST ACTIONS (S- N DIALOGUE, MARTIAL LAW, AND NEW CONSTITUTION) WERE DESIGNED ONLY TO KEEP PARK IN POWER. PRESS, OF COURSE, IS ONLY PUBLISHING WHAT IS PERMITTED AS PART OF GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION. NO BASIC CRITICISM HAS BEEN PERMITTED BUT A SPATE OF THE USUAL EDITORIAL AND ANALYTIC ARTICLES IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSALS HAS APPEARED.

4. REACTION FROM THE MILITARY, AS WITH OTHER ELEMENTS, APPEARS RESTRAINED. WE PERCEIVE NO VISIBLE HOSTILITY TO NEW POLICY AT THIS POINT, AND WE UNDERSTAND ALL SENIOR OFFICERS HAVE BEEN BRIEFED AND TOLD WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM IN THE WAY OF UNSWERING SUPPORT.
HABIB

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